

Chestnuts Primary School

Buckingham Road, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK3 5EN

Inspection dates 6–7 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Inconsistencies in teaching remain between classes and subjects. While there have been recent improvements to the quality of teaching these have not had sufficient time to improve pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Achievement in mathematics in recent years has not improved as quickly as in reading and writing.
- Literacy and numeracy leaders need to increase opportunities to carry out checks on teaching and pupils' progress in order to secure good achievement across all areas of the school.
- There is some inconsistency in the use and effectiveness of teaching assistants throughout the school and this hinders the progress pupils are able to make.
- Differentiation is not used consistently in all parts of the lesson to ensure that pupils' needs are always met and, as a result, progress can slow.
- Planned opportunities for using mathematics skills across the curriculum are not fully developed. Consequently, standards in mathematics remain weaker than in English.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, has instilled in the staff a determination to make the school more successful.
- The headteacher, well supported by governors, has provided strong leadership and a clear view for all staff as to what is needed for the school to improve. The result has been sharp improvements in teaching and a rise in pupils' progress.
- Pupils behave well, are polite and courteous and show respect for each other, staff and visitors to the school. Their behaviour is consistently managed and pupils are clear about how to stay safe.
- Attendance has improved and is now above the national average.
- Marking has improved throughout the school. Pupils know how to improve their work and their next steps of learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 17 lessons or parts of lessons. Two of these lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspectors heard pupils read and looked at their work.
- Meetings were held with pupils, governors, a local authority adviser and the school’s staff including senior and middle leaders.
- The views of parents and carers who responded to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) as well as discussions with parents and carers at the start of the school day were taken into account.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents including: the school’s self-evaluation and planning for improvement; the data the school keeps on pupils’ progress and achievement; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and the school’s safeguarding information.
- The inspection team observed morning playtime, lunchtime and attended two assemblies.

Inspection team

Sarah Somers , Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Kaufmann

Additional Inspector

David Westall

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Chestnuts Primary School is an average-sized school of its type.
- The large majority of pupils attending the school are White British and the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average, but those supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care, those who receive free school meals or are from service families) is higher than the national average.
- The school has a unit for pupils receiving additional support for a hearing impairment.
- The school meets the current floor standard which sets the government's minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- There have been significant staff changes over the last eighteen months, including the appointment of the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching across the school to enable all pupils to make at least good progress by:
 - sharing and building on the school's existing good practice, including drawing on the expertise of colleagues in the school
 - reviewing how effectively teaching assistants are deployed in the classroom
 - ensuring that differentiation to meet the needs of all pupils is evident in each part of the lesson
 - planning increased opportunities for mathematic skills to be used across the curriculum.
- Raise achievement in English and mathematics by making sure that literacy and numeracy leaders check the quality of teaching and learning to improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - having regular opportunities to check the quality of teaching and learning in their subject
 - holding regular pupil progress meetings with other teachers to check on pupils' progress
 - modelling good practice and sharing their expertise with other members of staff.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because standards and progress in mathematics remain weaker than in English and inconsistencies exist between pupils' progress across the classes.
- A high staff turnover in recent years held back the school's capacity for continuous improvement in attainment and progress. However, the achievement of current pupils in the school is rising quickly. It is improving because weak teaching over time and staffing instability have been tackled by the current leaders. School data from the tracking of pupils' progress, observations of learning, progress in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm this.
- In 2012, despite accelerated progress in their final year at school, some pupils in Year 6 did not make the progress expected from their starting points. This was largely to do with the legacy of their past underperformance. Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was, however, broadly in line with the national average in reading and writing. Attainment and progress in mathematics were not as strong as other subjects for Year 6 at the end of 2012.
- Senior leaders now have a robust system for tracking pupils regularly to make sure they are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Where any pupils are falling behind the school now has a clear system in place to take steps to make sure they catch up.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those with hearing impairments are well supported and, as a result, the majority make good progress. Similarly, attainment for pupils supported by the pupil premium is improving due to targeted support.
- Pupils' reading skills are developing well because teachers are effective in building on pupils' basic skills. Younger pupils use their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make to help them recognise new words. In the national test at the end of Year 1, they exceeded the national expectations.
- Reading has a high profile in the school and pupils are generally enthusiastic about books. There is excellent access to books in the entrance to the school and each morning parents help children to change their books.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because weak teaching in the past has led to pupil underachievement and to gaps in pupils' knowledge.
- Inconsistencies remain in teaching. For example, opportunities are sometimes missed to accelerate learning by the use of questioning to challenge and stretch pupils' thinking. Similarly, in some lessons, teachers do not plan activities that are closely matched to individuals' needs or use teaching assistants effectively enough so that they can make a difference to pupils' learning. Consequently, progress for some pupils slows.
- Opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills in other subjects are not yet as well planned as in literacy, and this hinders the levels pupils can reach. Teachers plan interesting links between literacy and other subjects to engage pupils in their learning. For example, a geography lesson about earthquakes and volcanoes led to pupils sleeping in the school overnight to simulate an evacuation centre. This was used as a starting point for creative writing.
- Strong leadership from the headteacher and deputy headteacher, changes to staffing, effective training and a willingness on the part of staff to develop their practice have all played their part in the improvements seen in the quality of teaching. For example, the whole school focus on the teaching of writing has had a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Pupils' improving achievement reflects the quality of teaching observed during the inspection. Where teaching was good it was characterised by lessons that were well planned. Teachers used questions skilfully in order to encourage pupils to think carefully and extend their learning. In these lessons, teachers kept a close eye on the pupils' learning and changed their plans to match pupils' understanding and progress.

- Marking has improved significantly since the last inspection. In nearly all classes teachers are consistent in providing written feedback to pupils on how they can improve. Pupils have the chance to respond with their own comments. Even the youngest pupils were able to talk about the colour coding system for marking, and how it helped them in their next steps in learning. They commented, 'Pink is for tickled pink and green is for growth.'

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to one another. They are polite, courteous and friendly. Relationships with adults in the school are also good, contributing very effectively to a calm, well-ordered and welcoming atmosphere. Pupils are keen to take on a range of different responsibilities, such as school councillors and play-leaders at lunchtime.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning, evident in the way Talk Partners are used in lessons. This enables pupils to listen to each other and work collaboratively.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and parents and carers agree. One parent commented, 'The school is like a family.' Pupils know how to seek help if they are worried and are confident adults will deal swiftly with their concerns. Pupils from different backgrounds get on very well together. They know how to keep themselves safe on the internet.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying and can explain how bullying differs from the occasional 'fall outs' which they have with each other. Pupils are insistent that these incidents are uncommon.
- As a result of strengthening partnerships with parents and carers, attendance has improved and is now above average. However, there remain a few families that the school is working with to improve punctuality.

The leadership and management are good

- The vision and determination of the headteacher and deputy headteacher that all pupils should have the best chances of being successful are at the heart of the rapid school improvement. They work hard to ensure all pupils have an equal opportunity and that there is no discrimination.
- Senior leaders have a realistic understanding of the school's present overall effectiveness and have a sharp awareness of what needs to be done to improve pupils' achievement. They have implemented tight procedures to enable teachers to track the progress of pupils in their classes and have high expectations of pupils' achievement. This is reflected in recent improvements in pupils' progress.
- Middle leaders work effectively as a team. They regularly check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. A regular 'teaching surgery' has been introduced to discuss improvements in teaching and learning with individual staff. This work has had a positive impact on teaching and learning. The recently appointed literacy and numeracy leaders are beginning to develop their roles but have not had sufficient time to bring about similar improvements, such as raising standards in mathematics or ensuring consistently good teaching across the school.
- The management of teachers' performance is now thorough and focused and closely linked to salary progression. Staff have clear performance management targets to bring about improvement and training is regular and relevant. As a result, there has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, although some inconsistencies remain, especially in mathematics. Staff are working with a partner school to further improve their practice. The local authority adviser has provided effective, well targeted support to improve teaching and learning.
- The school's curriculum has a strong international focus introducing pupils to a wide range of knowledge, building on their interests and skills and makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, a project exploring the rainforest turned corridors into a jungle, becoming a springboard for writing about the destruction of the

rainforest.

- The school spends its pupil premium funding well, for example through the use of a learning mentor, targeted support for learning and opportunities for pupils to experience a range of visits and visitors to enhance their learning.
- Procedures to ensure the safeguarding of pupils are fully in place and are given a high priority in the school. The recognition that the school is an extremely caring environment was clearly demonstrated during the inspection. For example, one parent shared the following information, 'My son, known for not liking school, is now ready for school at 7:15!'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The expertise of the governors has been developed through regular meetings with the senior leaders, additional training and support from a local school. The governors have supported the school well through a period of staff changes and have been fully involved in the recruitment of new staff. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, where teaching is best and where improvements still have to be made. Governors now have increased amounts of information about pupils' performance and funding, such as the pupil premium. They are developing their skills in using this information to hold the school and leaders to account and to compare how well it is doing in comparison with similar schools locally and nationally.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	132733
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	406492

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	274
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Revd. Brian Stocker
Headteacher	Allison Collis
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 October 2010
Telephone number	01908 373748
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